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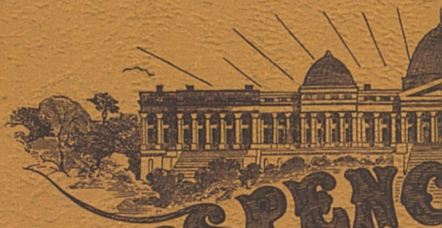

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THEORY

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SPENCERIAN PENMANSHIP

THEORY

OF

SPENCERIAN PENMANSHIP

FOR SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE LEARNERS

DEVELOPED BY

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WITH PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

DESIGNED TO BE STUDIED BY PUPILS IN CONNECTION
WITH THE USE OF
THE SPENCERIAN COPYBOOKS

BY

THE "SPENCERIAN AUTHORS"

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Present Publisher's Preface

Platt Rogers Spencer grew up loving graceful lines and beautiful writing. As a young child he drew letters on birch bark and on the sandy shores of Lake Erie. He admired the elegant signature of John Hancock on the "Declaration of Independence." Thus he seemed destined for the distinguished career in penmanship which became his. He developed a system of handwriting which dominated the schools for almost a century and he spent his life teaching it.

After Spencer's death, his five sons and another disciple carried on the work of teaching and of preparing publications. These men were known as "the Spencerian authors." They compiled this instruction book from the work of Spencer, arranging it in question and answer format. Spencerian teachers use this format as an aid to educating the mind, which must always accompany the training of the hand. Using questions and answers they can teach the theory of forming all letters from a few basic strokes, and can teach the strokes, size and spacing of each letter. When children have accurate images in their heads, then their heads can direct their hands.

Spencerian writing comes to us with a reputation for beauty, and it certainly is one of the most beautiful styles ever known. But it also has features of speed and ease. The fifty-two degree slant was carefully chosen as that which obtained for writers the greatest speed. And the plan of using only seven basic strokes to form all letters contributes to the ease of this system. Spencer taught that once such basics are learned writers can be individual in their styles, especially in the flourishes of the capital letters.

Lovers of Spencerian writing have been urging us to issue this book, so for them we have kept this first edition as close to the original as possible. In the handwriting, we made two changes in order to accommodate the system to today's classroom. For one, where the nineteenth century system had two lower case *s*'s, we have omitted the tall *s* and retained only the short *s*. For the other, we have changed the first stroke of

the capital *L* so that it begins at the top loop instead of on the baseline. This is to avoid too much similarity with the capital *S*. Nineteenth century classroom management procedures are left unchanged. Instructions for using steel pens are left intact. No editing has been done to update usages, except for changing the spelling of *hight* to *height*.

Thus we bring to the world again this treasure that was almost lost. Though Spencerian writing has lived on in people who use it and teach it, the original schoolbooks could only be found in fragile condition in a few rare book collections. Now we proudly present it to teachers and students and all lovers of beautiful handwriting.

George M. Mott, Founder
Mott Media

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

WRITING is almost as important as speaking, as a medium for communicating thought. For this reason it is said that "Writing is a secondary power of speech, and they who cannot write are in part dumb." Scrawls that cannot be read may be compared to talking that cannot be understood; and writing difficult to decipher, to stammering speech.

Theory directs, and Art performs; therefore inform the mind and train the hand. If you would attain high excellence in Penmanship, you must master the principles, and faithfully practice them.

SIGNALS.

COMMENCING AND CLOSING WRITING EXERCISE.

Remarks.—In every properly conducted school, the writing exercise is commenced and closed in an orderly manner. The following plan is suggested, but it will, of course, be modified by the teacher as circumstances may require.

Pupils should obey the signals silently and promptly.

The teacher can frame special questions, and give the necessary drill to secure the desired order.

The signals may be given by bell, tap, or by counting, at the teacher's discretion.

OPENING.

1. *Position at Desk.*
2. *Arrange Books.*
3. *Find Copy and adjust Arms.*
4. *Open Inkstands.*—In double desks the pupils on the left (the pupil's right) will open and close inkstands.
5. *Take Pens.*

At this point the teacher should pay particular attention to giving instruction in penholding. When ready to write, give the order to TAKE INK.

CLOSING.

6. *Wipe Pens.*
7. *Front Position.*
8. *Pass Pens.*—Collecting them in the *reverse order* of their distribution.
9. *Pass Books.*—Books are to be collected in the *reverse order* of their distribution.
10. *Close Inkstands.*

POSITION.

POSITION FOR WRITING.

Remarks.—The position for writing should be a convenient one, allowing the easy action of the right arm and hand. In sitting at a desk or table there is little choice between what are known as the "Left-side," "Front," "Right-oblique," or "Right-side" positions. They are all practiced by writers; but it is well for the sake of order and uniformity in a class that all the pupils should observe the same position. Whichever method is adopted, those who do not wish to become hollow-chested or round-shouldered, should learn to sit easily upright, and keep the shoulders square.

As the free use of the hand mainly depends on the manner of holding the pen, the *correct* method only should be learned, and persevered in until it becomes habitual and easy.

FRONT POSITION AT DESK.

1. Will you please describe and assume the Front Position at desk?

Sit directly facing the desk, near to it, without leaning against it, with the feet level on the floor, and the fore-arms resting lightly on the desk in front at right angles to each other. Let the right arm rest lightly on the muscle forward of the elbow—keep the wrist above the paper, and rest the hand lightly on the nails of the third and fourth fingers, which should touch the paper directly under the palm. Adjust the book so that the right arm will be at right angles to the lines on which you are to write. Hold the book in place with the fingers of the left hand.

NOTE.—The "Left side Position" varies from the "Front" in having the left side inclined toward the desk, and in placing the arms and book on the desk further to the right, so as to bring the right arm at right angles to the edge of the desk. This position is the most favorable for writing on large books which cannot be turned obliquely.

RIGHT-SIDE POSITION.

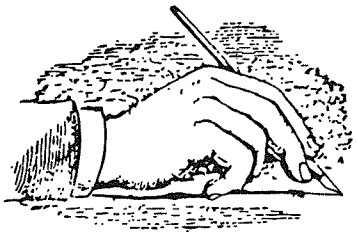
2. Will you please describe and assume the Right-side Position at Desk?

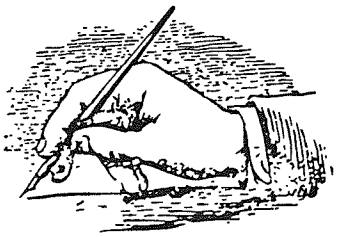
Turn the right side near to the desk, but not in contact with

it; keep the body erect, the feet level on the floor; place the right arm parallel to the edge of the desk, resting on the muscles just forward of the elbow, and rest the hand on the nails of the third and fourth fingers, keeping the wrist off the paper. Let the left hand be at right angles to the right, and resting on the book, keeping it parallel with the edge of the desk.

NOTE.—The "Right-oblique position," varies from the full "Right-side Position" in having the right side but partially turned toward the desk, and the arms and book placed obliquely on the desk. It will be observed by trying the different positions that the greatest uniformity in a class can be secured by the full "Right-side Position." When a position has been decided upon, the pupils should be prepared to describe and assume it promptly.

HOLDING THE PEN.





3. Will you assume the writing position at desk, and then describe the correct manner of holding the pen, conforming to it in each particular?

Take the pen between the first and second fingers and the thumb, observing, 1st, that it crosses the second finger on the corner of the nail; 2d, that it crosses the fore finger forward of the knuckle; 3d, that the end of the thumb touches the holder opposite the lower joint of the fore finger; 4th, that the top of the holder points towards the right shoulder; 5th, that the wrist is above the paper, and the hand resting lightly on the nails of the third and fourth fingers; 6th, that the point of the pen comes *squarely* to the paper.

MOVEMENTS.

Remarks.—The venerable Platt R. Spencer, originator of the Spencerian System of Writing, said: "Our intention has been to present to the public a system,

"Plain to the eye, and gracefully combined,
To train the muscle and inform the mind."

The training of the muscles of the arm and hand, by appropriate movement exercises, *must* be attended to. For, however distinctly a letter may be pictured in the mind, the execution of it on paper at all times depends on the control the writer may have over the muscles of the arm and hand. The *will* communicates its directing power through the numerous little telegraphic nerves, which descend from the brain—the direct organ of the mind.

In first attempts at writing, the muscles may not properly perform what the mind directs, but by frequent and careful practice they are rendered supple and obedient in the execution of every variety of form.

4. How many different movements may be employed in writing?

Four: Finger Movement, Fore-arm Movement, Combined Movement, and Whole-arm Movement.

FINGER MOVEMENT.

5. Will you assume the writing position, describe the Finger Movement, and make it?

The Finger Movement consists in the action of the first and second fingers and thumb, and is used chiefly in making the upward and downward strokes.

EXAMPLES.

NOTE.—This movement should at first be made with the dry pen, as indicated in the cut; at the same time deliberately naming the strokes: Upward, Down-